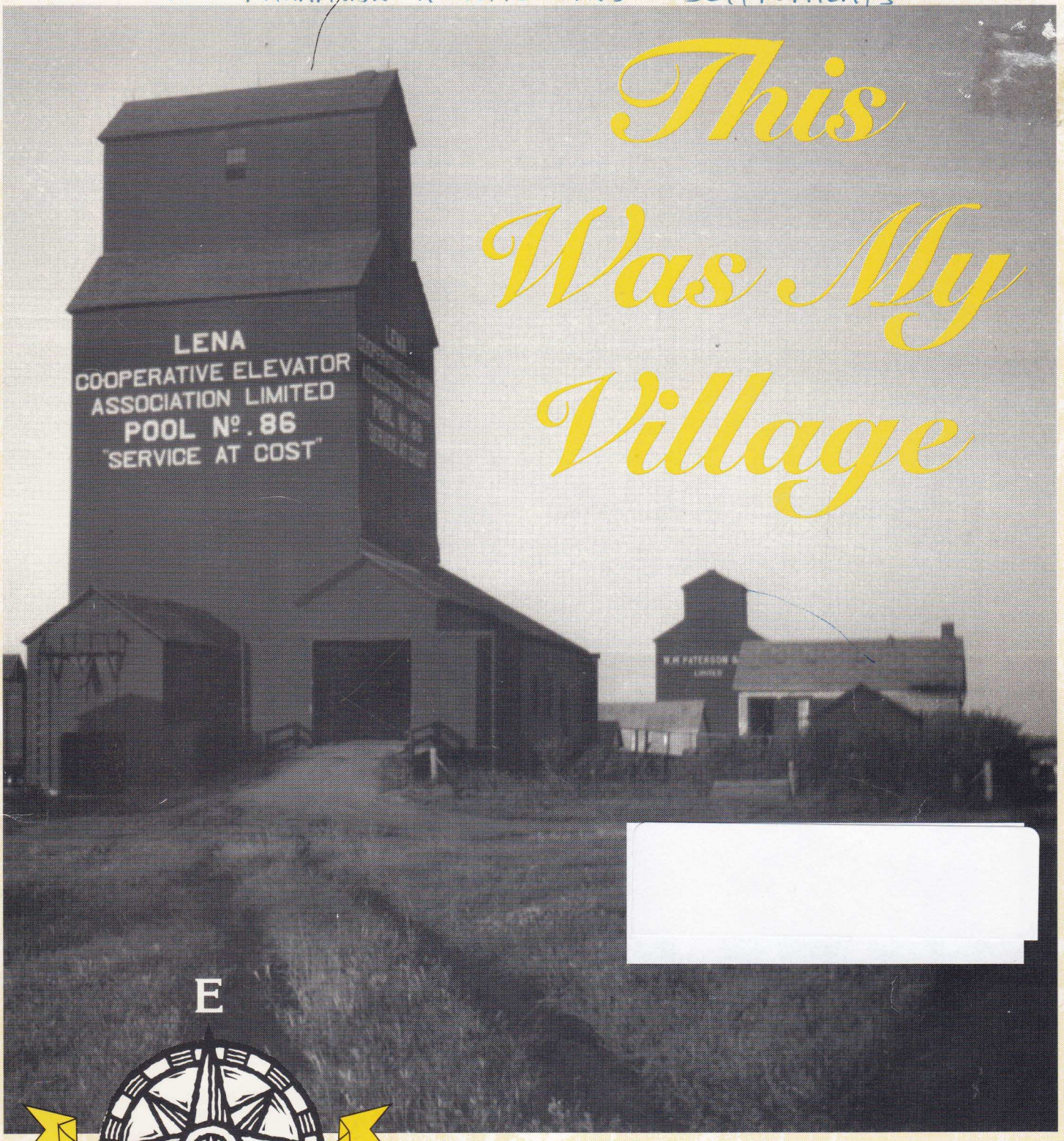
This Was My Village



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Lena, Manitoba

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An Historical Writing

by Mary Palmer

This Was My Village

When I was a child I enjoyed reading through the old literatures which my mother studied in her school days. One sad poem which I read over and over was Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, feeling sad because the young people danced no more on the green, wanting to pull the weeds "where still many a garden flower grows wild" and pricking my fingers with the old lady who "plucked her wintery faggot from the thorn."

Never, in those secure days of childhood, did I dream of our village suffering a similar fate.

Unlike many places in Canada, it is not impossible to set the date when it all began. The village began in 1904 when the railway went through, though there were people earlier living on both of the sections on which the village later rose.

The name came from a house post office which was located in the then Plum Hollow district (later at the very edge of Lena school district, when it was formed).

There is a story about the name, of course. Mr. James Johnston had put in an application for the post office, so had Mr. and Mrs. Fred Burrows. The latter were successful. They had not submitted a name, but were asked if they would accept that sent in by Mr. Johnston, Lena, the name of his second daughter.

The railway was built in 1904. It was not the main line of the C.N. but a branch (a branch of a branch really), "a twig line", but villages grew up along it. In the fall, when crops were good, trains of empty freight cars half a mile long made their way west to come back loaded, in numbers limited to what could safely negotiate Neelin Hill.

This part of the railway ran east and west parallel to the road allowance.

The station was located on the north side of the track. The fence separating railway property from the road ran a short way north of it.

South of the railway and east from the station rose a hill. A hotel was built on the hill, with the first store just west of it.

An elevator was built on the east slope of the hill, by the Young Grain Company, three brothers, one of whom became a senator.

The elevator was later sold and remodeled by the Paterson Company.

The first operator that I remember was Mr. James Miller. He drove back and forth every day in his little yellow car, from a farm three miles north.

Some distance west of the station and on the south side of the railway was the stock yard. A white-washed corral, with a sloping ramp, for loading cattle onto the train, and enclosing a small shed. A well was outside the corral.

A road ran down the west side of the hill. South of it stood the blacksmith shop (which faced the road). West of it was the lumber yard, its long open side facing east).

Coal sheds stood south of the track a short way east of the stockyards.

This road ended where it reached Dick Baxter's crossing where one could turn north and cross the railway to the road.

Before you reached his gate you would notice a gap in the fence, which the railway maintained between his property and theirs. A well beaten path crossed that field and through the house yard, to the well in the barnyard. This was good water and all the villagers carried their drinking water from there in pails, with Dick's permission. Tanks were not allowed.

A road also ran north down the hill, crossed the railway at the east end of the platform and connected to the east and west road. On the north of that road was a row of buildings. At the east where it joined the "main road" – later highway 18 – stood a two-storey house first occupied by the Darrow family. Later it was lived in by several other families. These men were probably employed on the track. Then it stood empty for years and was eventually torn down.

Next to it was the property of Alex Baxter. His house also had two storeys, the lower one consisting of one room. He had a barn for his team. He also had chickens. There were sheds as well, for his machinery. He ran a wood sawing and grain crushing business. At the back of his yard was his pasture.

He was a short man, deafened by a childhood illness. His felt hat, smock and kerchief showed the dust of his occupation.

In the next house lived the first blacksmith and his family, his wife, daughters Ruth and Viva and son Bruce. This was a square one-storey house with a long lean-to at the north. West of the house was his pasture. As this was before cars were at all common, he probably kept a driver or a team and possibly a cow.

West of the pasture stood the school a handsome sand-colored one-storey brick building. It was the last building in the row. It was built facing east, as the custom of schools at that time was to have windows all along the south side. The roof sloped up from all four sides. The chimney came out of the ridge at the back. At the front a small gable was set in, on which stood the belfry topped by the flag pole. The belfry never contained a bell. Northwest of the school and further back from the road stood the school barn. This was a good-sized shed as it not only accommodated the school ponies but sheltered the horses driven to church, dances, concerts and socials.

There was, when I first remember, only one other house in the village. It stood on the corner between the main road and a road running up the hill past the elevator and to the store.

How long it had stood there I don't know, but certainly the young bachelor, then living there, would not have built a two-storey house there when his farm was across the road. Also the trees between it and the garden were, I was told by a later inhabitant, fruit or nut trees. They never bore that I heard of.

South of the old house was a small barn which could not have held more than two or three head of stock. South of this barn a trail cut across to the store and as long as it remained open, was much more used than the straight one

When the first blacksmith sold his business he moved the part of his house to a farm. About this time the bachelor married. He bought the front part of the blacksmith's house and moved it to his farm. The house on the corner became the home of a succession of blacksmiths.

Across the road leading up the hill and within the railway fence stood an old railway car (the type used by gangs doing repairs on the railway). The wheels had been removed. It was occupied by extra railway workers from time to time, sometimes with families, sometimes single men.

On the hill north of the store stood another building called a weigh-scale. What was ever weighed on it I do not know. I think there were sliding doors comprising most of the east and west sides. Who built it or why?

This was the village as I first remember it.

Chapter 2
The Store and its Keepers

An enterprising German started the first store – various reports go "with stock of syrup and coal oil" under a small railway bridge east of the village site and – "tobacco, etc." in a stall in Dick Baxter's barn.

His business expanded until when he sold out it included: a general store (containing the post office), a hardware adjoining the store, a lumber yard (in the valley west of the blacksmith shop) and a row of coal sheds beside the railway (east of the stockyards).

He had also bought the hotel building when its owners' business failed, tore out the upstairs partitions, put in a hardwood floor and rented it as a hall.

The length of the store ran north and south. The customer's entrance was in the middle of the north wall (the rest of that wall being show windows).

On the left side as you entered, was the grocery section. Behind the counter, and in front of the window, hung the bunch of bananas. The other fruits (boxes of apples and crates of oranges) were packed behind the door and in front of the counter. There was also a shelved glass case containing fancy biscuits (cookies to Canadians).

Clamped to the south end of the counter, one above the other, were two rolls of brown wrapping paper. Near the ceiling hung spools of string, conveniently dangling down so that the adequate amount could be pulled down as needed.

Next to the wrapping paper was the circular cheese stand. The cheese itself was a slightly smaller circle so that the cover fitted neatly over it. A cleaver half the diameter of the cheese was attached to the stand and lowered to cut off the desired amount. The cut was then cloth covered before the lid was lowered. The remainder of that counter was left free for wrapping parcels. There was no such thing as a shopping bag. If you had brought eggs to trade, your purchases might be packed in your empty crate or basket.

Behind the counter rose the shelves on which were the tins and bottles of the smaller groceries. Sugar and such things as spices and dried fruit came in paper bags and were weighed out by the storekeeper as they were purchased. Vinegar came in a wooden barrel (you took your own stone jug to be filled from its tap). On the lowest shelf sat large glass jars of candy, packages of gum, popcorn, etc. Children were not then tempted by placing them within their reach. On the very top shelf stood large white milk pitchers. Lantern and lamp chimneys were also sold in grocery stores then as light bulbs are now. One storekeeper remarked that he sold them one month earlier after Daylight Saving was invented. Paper bags of various sizes were used for things inconvenient to wrap.

The dry goods were on your right as you entered. There were shelves of bolts of cloth, skeins of yarn, spools of thread, reels of ribbon, etc. These were enclosed in a tall glass case which reached the ceiling. Scarves and handkerchieves were also displayed here. There were shorter glass cases on each end of that counter whose contents varied with the season. Games and other things suitable for gifts before Christmas. I remember a china set of a hair receiver and powder box on a china tray.

There was a break in these counters half-way down the store. Originally a

stair came down behind the east counter. A doorway at the bottom of it led into a lane between the store and the hotel. This was later closed in. South of it was another counter topped by a glass case containing nothing interesting to me, then a wooden counter extending to the encloser of the post office. There were some mail boxes which opened with a dial. Everyone else got theirs handed through the wicket. In the very corner behind it was another door to the outside.

The back wall (south) was shelf on shelf of boots and shoes of all sizes. The south half of the west wall was shelves of men's clothing.

The second floor was supported by a row of posts down the middle. In front of the one nearest the door sat a wicker trunk. This contained bread. It arrived by train from Belmont packed loosely in newspaper. During the journey it cooled and on arrival it was taken out and wrapped in thin brown paper by the pan (four loaves), half pan, or single loaves.

Beyond the west break in the counter you could step down into the hardware. Just west of it was a stair which led to a large store room. From the store you stepped down into the hardware, from the upper storeroom you stepped up into the living quarters.

The family included the storekeeper's wife, her mother and brother and his nephew. The mother-in-law was French, the nephew Irish. The boy attended school as the one in his parents' district was then closed. One of the schoolmates recalled helping him bring a shipment of grapes from the station. Their efforts were rewarded by a basket of grapes, which at that time cost 25¢.

This storekeeper remained good friends with people in the district although he moved to St. John, North Dakota, when he retired. The nephew started a trucking firm and later drove a bus. The bus was marooned one night in a blizzard. The passengers cited him for bravery because he set off the next morning, on foot, still in the blizzard, to get help.

The next storekeeper was a young married man with a family The boy started school while they were there, his sister was still too young when they left. The man's sister lived with them and worked in the store. They were Scandinavians.

He opened business with a sale, which continued for a week or more. Local girls were hired to serve as clerks and an older woman hired as a cook, as the girls had their dinner there.

There were two stairs to the upper floor, the one from the hardware to a large room used for storage, and one behind the building which led up to the kitchen, on the southeast corner. The door from the storeroom led up a step, to make up for the one down from store to hardware, into a large room lighted only by a skylight, and the glass in the storeroom door. There was a bed room beside the kitchen and two on the north of the big room.

The train at that time brought the mail three times a week. The mail nights were a social time. There were posts with iron rings along the front of the store for tieing up horses and the school barn could accommodate quite a few. As cars became more numerous the hill would be crowded. Mr. Swansen got in ice cream for mail nights in summer, probably from the neighboring town of Killarney, which at the time had a creamery which made ice cream, selling it by the freezer-full. On one occasion it was not all sold and he sent the remainder down to the school, where we each enjoyed two to four cereal bowls of it each.

Everyone was invited to the store

one evening to hear a radio. The man from Enterprise (the next station east) who owned it, set it up (with plenty of eager and not too experienced help) in the post office. People came in whenever it was convenient for them. As my mother and I went in we met Mrs. Giddings coming out. "I am going home and listen to my tea kettle", she said. "It can make just as good a noise as that thing." We stayed and left agreeing with her. Some hopeful souls stayed working on it and eventually got some music at 2 or 3 a.m. Sixty or seventy years later people still bought gramophones. They called them record players (you can pick what you wish to hear on them.)

The next couple who ran the store were English. They had had a store in a nearby village, which was gradually dying as the railway which ran through it had closed down.

He made a practice of buying coal by the car load during the summer, selling it for cash, then filling his sheds with a supply for the winter. As coal was the principal fuel used in the community at that time, there were plenty of customers to make this system profitable.

He had a hand sleigh made by fastening boards across one bunk of a bob sleigh. This he used for hauling mail and groceries up from the station. On mail nights we made good use of it sliding down the hill. Two would stand behind to give it a push, the others got on, and when we got it going, we would jump on too.

Mr. and Mrs. Turner both worked in the store. A niece was sometimes employed as a clerk. They had a young son.

Over the outside door, between the protruding show windows was the step forming a triangle with one point cut off. In winter they enclosed it with a light weight door on the west side. They bought a St. Bernard dog for a guard. He made this little porch his winter home, so it was difficult to get in.

One day as I approached the door it was opened for me by a boy whom I had never seen before. He was a nephew of the Turners. His family had just moved from the same village. His father was an implement dealer. He stored his wares under the hall. Their house was hauled in and placed in the valley south of the store. Trees were planted close around the west and north sides. They had a small barn and several cows. The short-cut road from the store was closed off and the land, down to the blacksmith's garden became a pasture.

They were an energetic couple. He got the wholesale agency for oil. One day as we were walking up from school we saw what looked to us like an enormous rusty barrel lying by the road just south of the track, and wondered what it was. A day or so later workmen arrived and painted it, set it up and built a warehouse. From there oil and gasoline was trucked to farms. He also ran a cream route. Before this people had taken their own cream to the creamery in Killarney or shipped it on the train to Belmont.

She raised chickens for the fryer market, getting them in February, also terriers and canaries. She started a travelling library service. A large wooden box of books was shipped to her for a certain length of time. She had it set up in the store and notified people that it had come. She was there at certain times to open it. The procedure was then as in a public library, you selected your book, got your card marked, and were told if you were to return it in a week, or were allowed to keep it for two. When you returned it she asked your opinion, thus making sure that all the most interesting books got read. She carried this service for years. Every winter she organized a concert between

Christmas and New Year's. The proceeds went to the Children's Aid.

In the winter time when they could not attend their own church she came to ours. She had a beautiful soprano voice, sang in the choir sometimes, giving solos. She joining the Women's Missionary Society and held the office of supply secretary. At that time used clothing was donated to be given where needed. If there were any persons nearby in need of help, they were supplied first, the remainder were packed up and sent wherever instructions were received from head office. As she lived right "in town" it was handy for all to bring their contributions there. The meetings were generally held at the home of a member, and for convenience in winter time at those nearest the centre of the district. So the January meeting was at Mrs. Trevers'. When the ladies got up to sing a hymn the canaries would join in. Mrs. Trevers would immediately cover them up to quiet them down. I used to wish she would let them sing.

Fred was an only child and every child in the school was invited to his birthday parties.

At that time Chautauqua was held in Killarney every summer. One year school was in session before the afternoon when the children's program came on. Mrs. Trevers came to the school and picked up all of us who had season tickets, drove us in to see it and treated us to a cone afterwards. Years later when they started having Santa Claus day in Killarney, Doug saw that children from Lena got in to that too.

Another family, the Shermans, also moved in from the same village. Frank had worked on the railway there, and became the third man on the Lena section gang. They lived for a time in the railway car, then, probably because of his job, he was allowed to build a house in the railway yards east of the station. As his work on the track was part-time, he worked at other times on local farms, leaving at once when notified of a job on the track.

They had one son the same age as the Turner boy and they used to have him up to play with him. Shermans also had an adopted daughter. These children attended Lena school. Turners, however, had sold out and returned to England.

In the 1950s when I went to England I called on them. Ralph was by that time married and living in another city. We talked of the people in Canada. Mrs. Turner told how the boys from both of the districts were they had lived in Canada came to visit them, when they had leave during World War 2. She got 20 cots so she could give them a place to sleep. They talked to her of London and she was surprised at how well they understood the underground railway system of London.

We talked about the dry years, and she told me that there was a large cistern under the Lena store and the entire roof drained into it. She had given away soft water in those years to people to bathe their babies.

The next storekeeper had lived in Killarney some years before and was now returning from the United States. They repainted the store orange trimmed with black!!!! All the permanent residents could say was "Well it did need painted." They only stayed a few years, then retired to Killarney.

The next storekeeper was a woman with two school-aged daughters. Her younger sister came there with them, and a brother was also there for a time.

The eldest daughter was in my grade and we spent a happy tomboy year roaming the village with three boys. We helped catch a runaway team, played tag on the roof of the stockyard

shed, etc. She and the boy who lived in the village hitched a toboggan behind our sleigh one afternoon as we were going home and had come two miles when he remembered he was on his way to the store on an errand for his mother.

That June three of us went to "town", Killarney, to write our "entrance". This was a government exam which had to be written before we could attend high school. Our ways parted soon, and we had little to do with each other from then on.

While the uncle was still with them, the younger sister and a friend had an accident. The uncle was driving the pick-up behind the store. The girls chose to ride in the back standing on two cream cans. He called to them to duck as he was going under the clothes line. They didn't hear. Pearl was caught under the chin and her friend in the mouth. Viva ran around to the front of the store for help. She arrived there, her hand over her mouth, from which blood was streaming. There her mother, Mrs. Trevers and Joe Bates were in the midst of a political discussion. "I believe in Canada first," he said. Mrs. Giddings answered, "You believe in Joe Bates first, Joe Bates – – " At that point her daughter arrived. "Don't come to me, go to Pearl."

Mrs. Giddings came to, in Joe Bates' arms where Mrs. Trevers had pushed her before catching Viva, as both fainted.

The doctor warned Pearl's mother that she might have a concussion and to watch her pillow for blood for the next few days in case of skull injury. Viva's mouth was treated to heal the gums and warned that she would lose her second teeth early, which she did.

The next storekeeper had a family of five and two younger brothers living with him. The youngest brother and the two eldest daughters were in school. They also had a maid.

The former owner had quarrelled with Trevers and pulled down the hall so he had to take his machinery someplace else.

Doug had opened a store of his own, on the east brow of the hill across the road from the elevator, and applied for and got the post office.

The lumber yard's shed had long since been emptied and torn down.

The new storekeeper cleared out what was left of the hardware (there was lots of room as the shoe department had also disappeared over the years) and the hardware became a hall. The next winter he changed things again to have a bigger hall and the former hardware became the store.

Summer came and perhaps a bonfire was lit (as he and the older of his brothers had been cleaning up junk). Awakening in the night, he went to open the store room door. Closing it quickly, he shouted "Get up and get out, all of you." The adults wrapped the younger children in bedding and carried them down the outside stairs. The younger brother took his and his brothers' clothes. The eldest daughter took her own summer and winter coats. The toddler wriggled out of his covering and went back in and was taken out a second time. The eldest girl went back

to get her mother's suit but her father, who had gone back for his own and his wife's clothes, sent her out and when his son had been rescued, they sent the maid to take the children down the hill. Learning that the maid's possessions were still inside, he made one more trip and brought her dresses, but she lost her musical instrument and her money. The wife and children had not a shoe among them.

He entered the store by its outside door and got some of his business papers. An unsuccessful attempt was made to get he piano out of the hall.

Fosters took the three little girls home. The mother and the two younger children stayed at a neighbor's until her husband had to rush her to hospital.

When she returned, Mrs. Smirl held a kitchen shower for her. Her husband got his former job back. The maid was offered a job nearby which she accepted.

Chapter 3
The Blacksmiths

Joe Bates retired from blacksmithing to a farm. Stanley Smirl bought the square part of Bates' house and moved it onto his farm. A succession of blacksmiths followed him, in the house on the corner of the "main road" and the straight road up the hill.

The first of these was Swedish, named Brustead. He was skilled but not particularly strong. His wife sometimes assisted him in his work. They had two children, Florence, who was in my grade at school, and Raymond, younger. Mr. Brustead also left blacksmithing to go farming. He had promised Florence that he would bring her to Lena school until Christmas so that she could be in the concert. As this was a drive of between four and five miles, he arranged with my Dad to take us in the morning and Dad to bring us home, as their farm was two miles straight south of ours.

The next blacksmith had three daughters, 12, 10 and 5 years old. Their mother had left them. The two oldest tried to keep house and go to school and didn't do too badly. Mrs. Piper helped them some. She was Dick Baxter's daughter who kept house for him. Her husband was killed in World War 1.

The Dillons left quite suddenly. They were at school and their father came for them. Their possessions at home must have been hastily gathered up, for when my sister and I were walking home from school (by the short-cut road) that night, we found Violet's kitten crying in the garden.

The blacksmith shop was square or slightly rectangular in shape. For years it had a flat roof, then someone must have been reading a "western", for the roof was replaced by an inverted "V" with a false front.

I only remember being in it once.

The forge was at the south end, coal in a heap nearby. Tools lay on low tables or shelves. Cables for lifting heavy things hung from the ceiling. A half-barrel of water stood nearby. Shoes were cooled in it before being nailed to the horse's hooves. A horse shoe or a plough share were lifted off and on the forge with long-handled tongs.

In the days before garages, blacksmiths were called on to repair many metal objects. The rims of wagon wheels were heated and installed, the shoeing on sleigh runners also, axles straightened, etc. A vise held in place things which required detailed work, freeing both the blacksmith's hands. Some of the tools were known as dyes.

The third blacksmith who lived in that house, and his wife stayed there for many years. Mrs. Wheaton was an accomplished piano player. She taught music to quite a number of us. One year she gave us each a calendar with a picture of a famous musician and a short story of his life. She also played the accompaniment for our Christmas concerts, and during the several years when teachers boarded with her, helped sew costumes and props too.

One year a blizzard started on Monday night as we were about to leave school and did not clear until Friday. The concert was to be held the following week. She and the teacher had decided to give it up as a lost cause. However, on Friday, Miss Hills relented to the extent of telling us that if we could come and practise all day Saturday we could still have it. Of course we all volunteered to come. Mrs. Wheaton laughed afterward at the bustle they had to make, to

get the sewing done. To cap it all, one little girl brought her new dress the day before the concert to show the teacher. It was far too long and Miss Hills gamely took it home and shortened it.

One year four of us were there for supper one night. That too was something to do with the Christmas concert. Stanley Smirl came in and we asked him if he was going to be Santa Claus that year. He said no, it would be the real one from the North Pole. We were properly indignant, the idea, we were 10 years old!!!!

Mrs. Wheaton also led a girls sewing club. Girls from surrounding school districts belonged to it, one each from Plum Hollow, Victoria Lake and Rose Valley. There were none from Highview or Jacques, probably there were no teen-age girls there at the time.

Mrs. Wheaton had been brought up in Boston. She told us of how she had to practise her music before she could go out to play and often spent so long at the window watching the other children that she had no play time when she got finished practising. It sounded a rather unhappy life to me. My opinion of Boston was not too high anyway, that was where people lived on beans and threw tea into the ocean when they got in a temper. I did *like* Mrs. Wheaton for her differentness. Modern psychologists would say that she respected children's personalities. I was glad when the music lesson was over and the visit began.

She had a radio. It was the first one I can say I enjoyed listening to, Peter Coates reading *David Copperfield.*

One afternoon we sat out on the front porch. "Mary", she asked, "Did you ever wonder why the sky is blue and the leaves and grass are green?"

"No," I answered, "I never thought of it."

"Well we did one day when I was a child at school. So we went in and asked the teacher and she told us that blue and green are the two colors that are easiest on the eyes and so the Creator made the things there are most of, in those two colors. There are enough different shades of green that it doesn't get monotonous." I have heard a scientific explanation for this since but scientists don't seem to realize that The One Who made eyes also made the forces which made green be green, and blue be blue, just as He put the animals in the place where He had planted the food they were made to eat.

One of the teachers who boarded with her brought in a half-starved miserable-looking striped kitten.

"We are calling it 'Bones'," Mrs. W. told me, "but after a while we'll call it 'Fatty'." My private opinion, as a farm girl who had watched endless families of kittens, was that it would soon die. It didn't. He grew to be a big fat cat, but he still was 'Bones' or 'Bonesey'. Twice Mrs. W. (who didn't have a phone) had to summon the telephone men to rescue him from a pole up which he had been chased by dogs.

Mr. Wheaton sang at concerts. He was a big man and could really boom out Harry Lauder songs, so of course was invited to do so. He was both tall and stout and must have been well into middle age when they came to Lena as he was a veteran of the South African War, but he worked at blacksmithing and walked up one side of the hill and down the other four times a day and outlived his wife by many years, being a resident of Killarney senior citizens' home for some years. One year the teacher got him to drill us for field day. At that time the marching was the important part of field day. People told us we would have to watch out and keep time when we had a soldier drilling us but it wasn't like that. The thing he emphasized was keeping our heads up.

He would say "Don't look at the ground, you won't find any pennies."

The next blacksmith was a young chap newly married. He didn't like the walk over the hill and after their second son was born, they built a house near the shop, about where the south end of the lumber yard had formerly stood. It was while he was blacksmith that the shop burned down. The store burned on Saturday and the blackshop shop the following week. Mrs. Hardy, who had come from England after World War 1 and had seen bombing, stood with the tears streaming down her cheeks exclaiming, "Lena's going to be all burned up." If people hadn't got busy, it might have. The beef ring slaughter house, Giddings' garage and chicken-house and the Pool elevator were all watched closely. Water was carried from the stockyard's well. The garage (which was a lean-to) and nearest to the fire was pulled away from the chicken-house. The other buildings were wetted down. The Killarney fire engine was called. It ran out of gas a mile away. (A new one was on order and arrived a week later.)

The farmer who had received the blacksmith shop building in trade with Brustead called a meeting of farmers to decide if they wanted to keep the business going. He told them if they would each put up so much money he would back all the notes. They agreed. He then went across the line (the 49th) and picked up blacksmith tools. (Blacksmith shops cannot be insured unless the forge is built right up, of brick, from base to chimney top.) Of course, now-a-days they would have applied for a government loan. But people did things for themselves then, and the government didn't interfere then either.

This blacksmith was not strong enough to take the amount of work. Pounding plough-shares takes lots of muscle. Several of the younger farmers helped him in the winter when they were not busy. So he too went farming after a few more years.

He was replaced by another young married man. After a few years he moved to a larger town. Mechanization had lessened blacksmithing. Younger farmers who had seen half the horses killed off in the working season by encephalomyelitis turned to tractors that didn't get sick. Mustangs were brought in but could not do the heavy work like the Clydes and Percherons. Also dry years diminished ploughing in favor of discing which left some stubble cover as protection from the wind. Sharpening shears and shoeing horses had been the two main jobs of the blacksmith. Garages now being built would do other metal repairs.

Chapter 4
The Hall

The Hall was used mainly in winter. There were concerts, mostly local talent, though some from the nearest town. I remember one lady who recited. She was employed in some secretarial position in the creamery there. She wore gowns both gay and elaborate, heavy make-up and a profusion of jewellery. Her recitations were very dramatic. There were plays from neighboring villages and school districts. The fowl suppers were also held there until the church was built.

It was always brisk work to get the tables down and the plank seats arranged for the concert which followed.

This was also true, in reverse, when a dance followed a concert.

Access to the hall was gained by an outside stairway. The landing was supported by stakes driven into the ground. The braces criss-cross between them to reinforce them gradually disappeared. The railing around the landing lost most of its posts and the corner away from both building and stairway swayed down steeply. When clearing for a dance it was common practice to thrust the planks over this railing or between posts. Some altered this by shoving the planks down the stairs. If there was not someone at the bottom to collect them, they piled up and those not staying for the dance had to pick their way around them. Years afterwards I was told of an incident. An old lady was coming down, when a plank came down. A young man at the bottom, seeing that it could knock her down, ran up, caught her in his arms as it reached her, depositing her on the ground, and racing to the top, gave those responsible an effective lecture on planks, stairways and old ladies.

For one concert they invented a novel way of charging admittance, a six foot rule was attached to both doorposts and as people entered they were stood against one, and measured and the rhyme was recited to them.

Five cents a foot for the first five feet.

A cent an inch 'till your height is complete.

When a taller man came in, someone had to go for another ruler.

The hall was lighted by gasoline lamps hung from hooks in the ceiling. As the first of the crowd gathered, several young men were busy burning off mantels and supporting one of their number while he hooked the rod atop the lamp unto the hook in the ceiling.

The season of the hall's use began with the Fowl Supper. This was the women's money-making affair. They supplied the food, chickens they had raised, vegetables they had grown, bread and pies they had baked, butter and pickles they had made. They cooked the food and dished it up and their daughters served it. The older boys poured tea and coffee from large enamel pitchers. Before the church was built the money was divided between the W.M.S. and and the "furnishing fund". The latter was to buy things for the church when one could be built.

The same planks that formed the seats for concerts were utilized to construct tables on saw-horses and also in place of chairs.

In those pre-hydro days the ladies brought their oil stove (on which they cooked at home in the summer). A two-burner would hold a wash-boiler in which water was heated for coffee. Kettles for tea, pots of potatoes and

other vegetables boiled on others while gravy and meat were kept hot on others. Some had three burners (the ovens, which sat on top for baking, were left at home). Specially made boxes with narrow-depth shelves and a sliding door were made for transporting jello, salads, pies, etc., were made from the firmer sides of an apple box. They bought along their long white tablecloths to cover the rough boards.

Next in time came the Christmas concert, the big affair as far as the children were concerned. For weeks before we practised songs and drills. Then there were dialogues, pantomimes (a different one every year) for which we dressed in cheesecloth dresses (which our mothers remodelled each year to a different pattern.) These were acting out carols, etc.

One year we were each a star

I am the north star trusted and true

I guide the lost mariners across the deep blue

When the night is unclouded, I'm always in place

And off in the north you can see my bright face.

Another said

I am a comet with a long firey tail

And before my bright beauty

All other stars pale

Other famous stars spoke in turn. Last of all was the Christmas star, to whom the other stars then bowed.

By the night of the concert we could quote each other's parts. A day or two beforehand the older girls had candy bags to sew, while we practised something they were not in. These were made of net in bright colors overcast with a different color of wool. Why these were preferred to paper I do not know.

Between Christmas and New Year's came Mrs. T's Children's Aid Concert of mostly local talent. The choir sang, Mrs. Wheaton and Mrs. Allen played the piano, several men played violins, usually in duets or trios. Mr. Wheaton sang, also Mrs. Carton. There were sometimes skits, minstrel shows, etc.

Sometimes parties were held in the hall. A farewell for a family who were moving to B.C. It was winter and during the evening a storm came up. Several of the men went out and looked at the weather and declared they could not find their way to the school barn. The benches were cleared from the back of the hall and we children started games. We were playing drop-the-handkerchief when the adults joined in. You may imagine the scene. The floor was reinforced by a beam which ran the length of the hall. The walls had settled so that the north and south were lower than the middle, a definite slant. Of course it was well polished. Try running up and down a slippery hill!! Those in the circle were constantly grabbed by the runners to keep from falling.

Gradually braver or sleepier families departed. Some lingered on to early morning hours.

There was also a farewell held there for the Swansens. Turners held an auction there of furniture, etc., which they did not wish to take with them.

The northwest corner of the hall was partitioned off for a dressing room. Along the rest of the west wall was the stage. The heater sat just out from the stage and dressing room corner. When, a few days before a Christmas concert, we went up to practise, there was a fire already lighted and a scuttle of coal and an armful of wood ready.

The Christmas tree was set up at the opposite end of the platform on the day of the concert.

The front row of benches were set up before hand, so we could practise marching up and breaking into rows. On a chord we turned to the right, another one struck and on the next note we

began the chorus. One year for some reason another lady came to play the accompaniment. She insisted on playing an introductory phrase and was disgusted that we did not know when to start singing.

The school district southwest of Lena was called Victoria Lake (after a small lake about a mile north of it). They got up several plays in that district and put them on in the hall with elaborate scenery. I remember one in which Effie Johnston was the leading lady. She took the part of a young lady with a number of suiters. One of them, the milkman, was portrayed by her brother Rob.

Plays were also brought from Enterprise, the next station east. A play which impressed me was the story of a man married to a country girl. His city people were against her and made her so miserable that she went back home. In spite of the lies that his family told him, he came after her, and it ended happily. Where these actors came from I do not know.

In the Jacques district (northwest) lived a Polish family, who were quite musical. Two brothers played the viola and the cello. Their sister gave a monologue one night, part speaking, part playing the violin. Playing her own accompaniment, she sand "Love's Old Sweet Song".

In 1927 the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation was celebrated. The schools of High View, Jacques, Plum Hollow and Lena were to celebrate at Lena. High View and Jacques came to Lena several times in the preceding weeks, for the teachers to co-ordinate the program and to practise. Of course the stage in the hall was too small to accommodate us all for the choruses so we practised down on the floor.

Plum Hollow never got to practise. 1927 was a year when it rained all summer. It was also the year they built the section of Highway 18 between Lena and the U.S. boundary. Anyone who has driven on freshly made grade (before it has been gravelled) can imagine, not to mention, dodging four-horse teams with scrapers attached, or the rocks that were left where they were stirred up until Sundays when the crew blasted them small enough to haul into a ditch.

It had been planned to hold the program in the schoolyard. A stage had been built there, but of course it was raining, so they thought of holding it in the hall. When they realized that it was too small, they waited for a lull in the rain, then took us down the hill in cars.

The car in which I rode contained, besides the driver and three children (the other two from High View) Mrs. T. and a big iced cake (not belonging to any of us, of course). Fortunately it had been set, for safety's sake, in a preserving pot (as we went down the hill like the letter z).

Doug Trevers, who was acting what one would now call master of ceremonies, kept calling.

"We must celebrate. It's 75 years 'till the next one and those of us who are alive, will be too old to enjoy it then."

So finally we got going. The teachers lined us up in the school and we marched out.

No one thought of a hundred year celebration then. A war and a lot of other things happened in between. Were any of us then living in the district?

What we wore in 1927 was the then unofficial uniform, dark skirt and middy (a heavy white cotton blouse, with a wide sailor collar, navy blue with three wide stripes as its trimming).

Plum Hollow had managed to get there that day. The song Manitoba, which the rest of us had learned as a chorus, they had learned as an action song. So we all sang it together. Which

unfortunately gave them no separate part in the program.

A boy from High View had a recitation:

The Dutch may have their Holland
The Spaniards have their Spain
The Yankee-Doodles south of us
Can south of us remain
A chap still has the best of them
If only he can brag
That he was born in Canada
Beneath the British flag

A girl from Jacques also had a recitation:

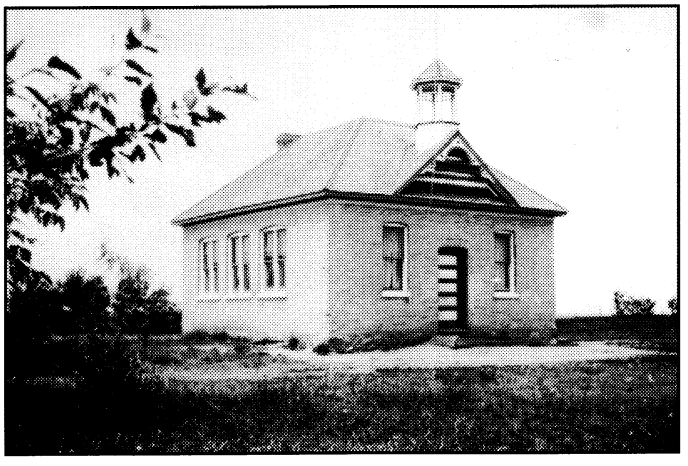
Lena had a pageant of the provinces coming into Confederation. We girls each carried a plaque with the name of a province. (I had the delightful honor of being Manitoba.) A boy beside us carried a product or products of that province. Manitoba and Saskatchewan, of course, each had a sheaf of wheat. The boy with Prince Edward Island a plate of vegetables. The season was late that year so we coaxed him for a radish (gardens not having developed to that stage yet). He wouldn't of course. (I think the teacher may have let him eat some after.)

Another event took place in the hall before it was demolished, was the year the Chautauqua came to Lena. This was not the big 10-day one formerly held in Killarney. The lady in charge came down to the school beforehand to give us a pep talk about it. There was something concerning a criminal. (It may have been a demonstration by an escape artist.) She made a big thing about coming near were a dangerous criminal had been captured. Of course we knew the Boston strangler had been captured at Wakapa, escaped from Killarney jail, and recaptured again there and maybe she knew that. Or did she say the same thing in every school? There was to be a Chinese lecturer, and she urged us, when he should ask for questions to ask why they used chop sticks instead of knives and forks and also to write something in Chinese. (In my own school teaching days I found his two words for peace useful in illustrating differences in ways of writing where ideas were used instead of sounds.) There was also a Hawaiian group performing in front of a volcano.

Chapter 5
The School

The School District of Lena was formed after the railway was built. Parts of Plum Hollow and High View were included. The boundaries were somewhat uneven as some far out wanted in while some nearer were indifferent (or perhaps thought taxes would be lower outside.)

As it was over 15 years old when I first started to attend, it had lost its brand new look. The paint below the belfry was still bright and although the door was a little battered the paint was not badly scarred.



There were two windows in the cloakroom, one on each side of the door, and six in a row along the south side of the classroom.

It was heated by a stove set just inside the cloakroom partition. Stove pipes extended across to the chimney in the west wall. A heavy tin jacket enclosed the stove, drawing cold air in from below, and shooting hot air up to the ceiling. A small oval pan was attached on the inside of the jacket, for water to humidify the air. There were blackboards along the north wall and on each side of the chimney on the west.

During the time when I was going to school there were two drinking fountains, a galvanized iron one which was discarded for a crockery one. Each of these had two parts, the water was poured into the top and filtered into the lower. Sometimes impatient people dipped a cup into the top when it filtered too slowly. The upper section was cleaned with a brush.

I didn't not like school at first. We had a man teacher who shouted at me to put my pencil in my other hand. He drilled us younger ones on the alphabet, pronouncing the last letter "zee", as he came from the United States. Grade 8 or 9 was taking "A Christmas Carol" that year and he said they were not reading Scrooge's part emphatically enough and proceeded to illustrate. This amused us all, and at recess the boys went around shouting "Good Afternoon" at each other in appropriate tones of sarcasm.

The "flu" which followed the First World War swept through the district followed by measles and mumps. The teachers as well as pupils were incapacitated by these illnesses. There were at least half a dozen teachers and partially trained substitutes teaching during the year.

There were no work books in those days. One reader lasted all year. We took our spelling out of it. It contained stories about two children, some of Robert Louis Stevenson's poems, etc. One exercise we were sometimes given to do, which I always considered fun, was picking little words out of a long word. I remember once being asked to write a story about a picture of a little girl with a kitten. To occupy our spare time we had tickets, both letters to form words (one way of studying spelling) and numbers with signs + , – x , ÷ + = to make questions. Also sewing cards and

plasticene (which I avoided whenever we were given a choice as I abhorred the smell and hated to eat lunch with it on my hands.)

Except for the children who lived in the village we all brought our lunch (in syrup, lard or honey pails). On sunny days we sometimes ate outside. On the south side of the school was a large covered wooden box (used to hold fuel). Three or four of us could sit on it side by side.

As quite a few children drove to school, a teacher one day decided to take a picture of the boys with their horse or pony. They all lined up nicely, but one that never got on with the other horses. It would not come into the line-up. Someone had the idea of getting it there first. So the others moved away, but as soon as they returned, it took off. Then the boy's cousin (who was one of the bigger boys) got it in place. Being so tall, he could place his feet firmly on each side and thought he could hold it there. The Shetland ran away and left him standing there.

In the southeast corner of the barn was a small place partitioned off in which straw had once been stored. Here that pony had to be stabled, to save the other horses from being kicked. There was no proper loft in the barn. There was some lumber lying loose on the rafters. Sometimes some hay or straw, etc., was piled on there to feed some-one's pony or to keep the barn warmer in winter. The boys played up there, jumping to grasp a rafter, then swinging their legs up. Sometimes they landed in heaps when coming down hastily when the bell rang. Once a boy landed wrong and broke his arm.

In hot weather we girls played in the school's shade, a game called Mother – Mother, the pot's boiling over." "In winter it was "steps" or "poor pussy" or tic-tac-toe and hang-the-man when the teacher allowed us to use the blackboard.

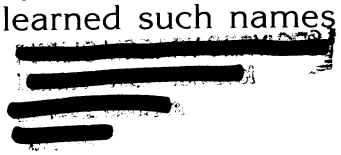
The railway had what was then called snow panels (long wooden slatted structures) which were placed between the railway and the fence, so that too much snow would not drift on the track. In summer these were stacked in long "v's" running north and south. One summer we girls used one as a play-house. It was handy to the school. Just across the road (no one ever told us we must stay in the school yard). We fixed it up with tin cans, broken dishes and plants. A hanging Russian thistle was a cactus.

One year there were basketball poles set up. By using all the girls we could make up two teams. We shorter ones were obliged to play centre. The boys played hard ball when it was dry enough.

In the spring or wet weather they joined us playing pom-pom-pull-away, steal sticks, etc.

During the spring term the boys often spent noon-hour drowning out gophers, as the municipality paid 3¢ a tail. The tails we caught were brought to school and counted out before the teacher. She kept a list of names and amounts to submit to the municipal office.

In grade 3 we started geography, memorizing the names of continents, oceans and zones. "The earth has a cancer on its head and a corn on its toe." There were maps in our books, and a globe which was used to illustrate day and night and the seasons. On the wall was a wooden map case. The front panel, which fastened at its top edge, let down. The maps were on rollers (like window blinds), several continents were shown on each map, and all British territories were in red. In later years the chocolate bar maps arrived. These showed the newly named countries of Europe and we learned such names as



Jugoslavia. A few years later they started spelling it with a "Y". When I could draw a map of North America to her satisfaction, one teacher gave me a more difficult task of making an outline map with damp sand. The mountains would not stay up and the river-beds filled in.

Fresh library books arrived every year. The cupboard where they were kept had, I was told, been bought by the pupils to hold the dinner pails. When its use had been changed, I do not know. We kept our pails in the cupboard formerly used by the Sunday School for its library when church was held in the school. The books from it disappeared, perhaps absorbed in with the school's books, perhaps forgotten in some people's homes.

In grade 4 we started English history and a year or two later Canadian (arriving in Canada with Hudson and Cabot).

We started grammar in grade 5. I could make no sense of it until I reached grade 7. (Why take a perfectly good sentence apart and label the pieces?)

When I was in about grade 6, the teacher had wash basins got for the school. Each family supplied their own towel and soap.

Another family came to school when I was in grade 6. I had a new classmate. He sat behind me. I turned with my geography on the edge of his desk and we studied together, learning the coast waters, mountain ranges and prinicipal rivers of Asia. To our delight there was a river, Lena.

That year hot lunches were started in the school, canned soup, beans, eggs, sometimes cocoa. The teacher heated these on a little stove. In the spring we buried the cans in a hole which the boys dug for that purpose.

That year too a basement was dug beneath the school and indoor toilets put in. There was plenty of room down there too to store fuel.

In grade 7 we studied agriculture (as in all country schools at the time), but when we started grade 8, that course was changed to science. Then it was plants we pulled apart. This course included also insects (life story of bees and grasshoppers), also mammals, the solar system, levers, pumps, and Archimedes' principle. We must have taken some experiments as we learned the names of the glassware like Florence flask, test tube, etc.

There were five pictures in the classroom. I once heard Mrs. Bates say how proud they were when they got them. There were the King and Queen, of course. He was in uniform with his garter ribbon, she in a frilly white blouse. There was a battle scene, an officer on a white horse waving his sword and shouting "Up guards and at them." The other was a St. Bernard dog standing in the snow with his barrel hanging around his neck.

Some things were different from present-day classroom practices.

There had originally been ink-wells in the desks. The glass which held the ink was gone but some of the iron frames, which had held it, were still in the holes in the tops of the desks. We did have ink supplied to us. It came in either bottles or in tablets, which dissolved in water. We were not allowed to use ink until grade 3 or 4. The pens were known as steel pens. Only the nib of course was steel. We bought them in packages. A curved slot in one end of the handle held the nib. Care had to be taken not to get too much ink on the nib as you dipped it, as it would fall in blobs on the paper. As we got into higher grades, we were allowed to use fountain pens. They were considered too messy to be used by small children.

On cold winter nights the ink froze in the bottles. They were set on the sheet

of tin under the heater to thaw. Sometimes a cork left in would pop as the ink thawed.

Killarney at that time held a Children's Fair. The exhibits were map drawing, proper sewing of buttons, garden vegetables, collections of weeds, and of course, hand-writing.

In later years these were put into the adults fair.

Chapter 6
The Church

The first public building in each district was usually the school. It was used for all public purposes.

Church services were were held in High View, Plum Hollow and Victoria Lake schools. Services were held in summer when student ministers were given a "field" to hold services during his holidays from college. Money collected from these congregations helped to pay these ministers-in-training.

Before services were held in Plum Hollow school, the young people went around holding hymn sings on Sunday evenings. At first they went where there was an organ. Later they were invited to other homes.

One Sunday my dad arrived at the school and found the student lighting the fire.

"You know," he said, "It would be handier for you to do this. You live nearer."

Dad agreed and took on the job of lighting the fire for church services.

By the time the Sunday School moved to Lena, he had become the superintendent.

In the High View district the mission services were held in my grandmother's house, later in the school. My mother had taught Sunday school and became superintendent. She was given the position of secretary at Lena.

At first Lena Sunday School was held in the railway freight shed, until the school was built.

After the Lena congregation was dissolved, two people were still living in adjoining districts who had attended that Sunday school. Laura Bacon (Stockwell) in Rose Valley and Alex Johnston in Jacques district. The Women's Missionary Society was organized in 1913.

From the time Lena school was built, it was used for church services.

At first three denominations shared it. The Anglicans had morning service, the Methodists and Presbyterians had theirs in the afternoon.

The Anglicans built a church in the Jacques district. The Methodists planned to build (even ordered windows). Disagreement arose and plans were dropped. The Presbyterians carried on with their afternoon service and were gradually joined by some from the other denominations.

For the church service the teacher's desk was transformed into a pulpit by the removal of her books and placing of a red felt-covered box with a slanting top. There was an organ which belonged to the community. A lady from a nearby farm played it relieved sometimes by others.

A missionary from China once remarked that it reminded him of his church in China, the women sitting on one side and the men on the other. However, in China there was a partition between so that only he could see both sides.

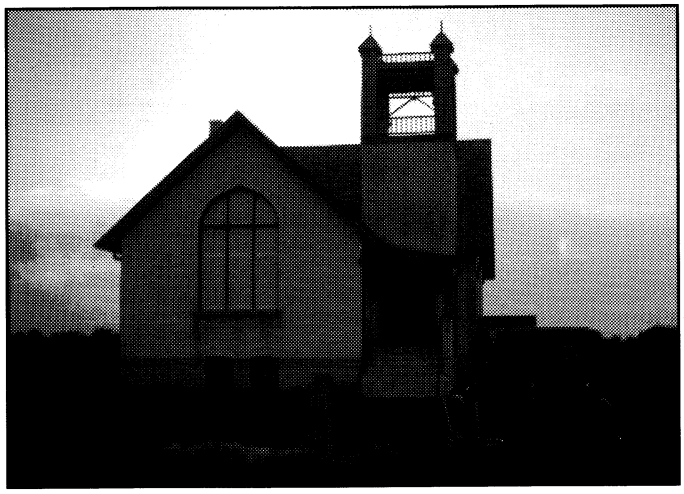
The idea, however, was one of chivalry. The larger desks were on the south side nearer the windows, so the men took the smaller desks. There were benches along the north and south walls and a lower one in front of the north row of desks to accommodate the primary class in Sunday School. There were a few chairs in a corner by the stove. These were occupied by the oldest ladies. They wore veils pulled tightly over their faces and tied at the back of their necks. When there was a large

crowd, the older boys and young men perched on the cloak-room partition.

One Sunday after the men had gone out to hitch up, the women were chatting when suddenly there was the sound of a running horse and a swish of wheels. Those nearest the door reached it in time to see Foster's buggy dashing down the road. A young man came running from the barn.

"Foster's barn is on fire! We helped the boys hitch up and now we are all going. You be ready to get in when they come."

The women hastily gathered their children, one stood as a lookout, calling out the name as each rig started from the shed. The families quickly scrambled in. The mile-and-a-half was soon covered and the horses tied to the fence, but the barn was beyond saving. While some men carried water and poured it on the house roof, others dragged what they could from the barn. Two men had to turn back and Mr. Foster himself was dragged out. Another stepped forward to make the attempt. Mrs. Foster seized his coattail.



"No! No one else is going in there. It isn't worthy any of you getting killed."

The remains of the structure fell. The fire out, the people turned to look at one another.

"Mrs. Foster, where is your baby?" someone asked.

"Here, in my apron," was the calm reply. She had thrown the skirt of her apron over the arm in which she held her sleeping daughter.

It wasn't until after World War 1 that cars became at all common. I remember on the way to church looking north up the main road (now highway 18) at the row of traffic coming, and identifying the various families by their horses, as people now recognize their neighbor's cars. Color was one way, a wide white blaze or spot on an otherwise bay or black horse. Characteristics as a constantly nodding head also helped with identification.

When cars were becoming more common, a young minister arrived some time before his car did. However, he did not consider it fitting to go visiting on his bicycle, so he borrowed my father's car which was the same as his own, returning it in time for my parents to proceed to a church meeting that night.

He arrived back while Mom and Dad were out milking and proceeded to cook himself some supper (as he had not been invited where he had visited) and help my sister (age 8) with the dishes, much to her embarrassment. (Should one allow a minister to dry dishes?)

He was not easily bothered. In an effort to help pupils learn the books of the Bible he asked if they could think of a way which would help in remembering the order. One boy recited

Four corners to my bed
Four angels 'round my head
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Bless the bed that I lay on.

and the minister agreed that it was helpful.

One hot summer day he suggested that it was too hot for the men in their suit coats.

"So we will all take them off" and proceeded to do so himself.

Years later I saw a minister take his off in church but he did not offer the same relief to his fellow sufferers in the pews.

Another summer he had an even better idea. The pulpit was carried outside, the benches lined up in front of it, and the cars were drawn up around the sides and back of them. He also started us on a course of memorizing of Bible verses, for which we got framed certificates. He also had us learn the words of a new (to us) carol, Away in a Manager (number 729 in the book we were then using.)

Sunday School was held after the church service. A curtain was drawn down the middle of the room. The adults class was on the south side, another curtain shut off the primary class in the northwest corner from the boys who were next. The older girls met in the clockroom.

There was a small library belonging to the Sunday School. When I was in the primary class I remember borrowing my favorite book about a Brownie in a coal cellar (I looked hopefully in ours but never found one there.)

Andrew Little was our next minister. He sometimes came to the school to give us a talk on Friday afternoons. After reading about Jesus turning water into wine, he asked us if God turned water into wine today. One boy answered "No."

"Yes He is," he replied.

"He sends the water as a rain, the vines grow, the grapes develop and are made into wine, people help in the process. What Jesus did was speed up the process."

It was while he was our minister that the church was built on the land that had been Bates' pasture.

We children, eagerly watched the digging of the basement, which was done by volunteers, local men with scrapers (the kind drawn by two horses.) When the building was commenced, however, we were given strict orders to stay away.

A qualified carpenter was of course engaged to do the building. It was one of the First United Churches built in Canada.

The door was on the south-east corner. It opened into a small vestibule, in the west wall of which was a door into a long narrow room. The north wall of it, was a row of doors which could be folded back, opening to the main part of the church to make more room when necessary. Chairs and benches were kept there for that purpose.

The north door of the vestibule led into the east aisle. There was a long row of pews across the centre with shorter ones across each aisle. The west aisle could be reached either by walking behind the long pews or through a door, from the backroom, which was hinged to open separately.

The pulpit stood on a platform at the north end. A small room opened off it, which was used as a classroom for Sunday School. West of the platform on the main floor was a slightly larger room. It served as the choir room and also for the primary class for Sunday School.

The main part of the church was lighted on those rare occasions when it was used at night, by two large hanging lamps. As the ceiling was high, in order to hang them, one of the younger men would stand with his feet on the back of two pews with another supporting him. There were a number of smaller lamps on brackets. The doors were not locked and the small lamps gradually disappeared. The larger lamps were replaced several times, by different kinds, finally gasoline lamps were used as in the hall.

Not thinking it right to lock a church door, the remaining small lamps were placed in a small cupboard under the basement stairs, which was especially made for them, equipped with a lock. Two of the shorter benches were placed in the two smaller rooms, some in the long room and some in the basement.

The church was packed for the dedication ceremonies. The young minister who had preached outside was there as the guest speaker. He mentioned how plans for building a church had been made before and delayed by World War 1. Long portions of scripture were read, telling what Solomon said at the dedication of the temple.

There never had been a choir in the school house, but Mrs. Stewart got all the good singers she could persuade to form one for the dedication service. One man agreed.

"For just this once."

He never went in it never again. However, the choir continued, Mrs. Stewart playing the organ until the Sunday before she died. After that her daughter and another young woman played it for several years, also those who had sometimes relieved Mrs. Stewart. When those two young ladies married, others took over. Helen Melville played for some years. In winter when her family did not come, she rode horseback over three miles to get a ride with John Johnstons.

That year the fowl supper was held in the basement. It had been delayed until November in order to do so. It was held on the Monday after dedication Sunday. In those days money-making affairs were *not* held on Sunday.

Mr. Anderson was our minister during the depression. When they could not pay his full salary, they offered to pay him later when they would be able. He said, "No, whatever you can pay me now will be my salary." For several years he was paid one hundred dollars a month. He was a married man with a daughter in high school. As times improved his salary was increased year by year to the former amount. In one of those laters years someone complimented his wife on her new hat. She remarked that she had worn the last one for eight years. She had a good singing voice and sometimes came out and sang a solo in church accompanied by her daughter who was an accomplished musician.

Mr. Anderson stayed on for sometime after his wife's death. He visited farms while harvesting was in progress and sometimes stopped to have lunch with the threshing gangs. He was a great walker. He would get a ride out to Lena (all the ministers lived in Killarney) and then walk four miles to see a daying man. When he left he was presented with an overcoat. The remainder of the money which had been donated was presented in a wallet. It was remarked that he probably gave it away, as he did with the prizes he won curling.

The next minister was a young married man with a little daughter. He was a singer and often sang solos at fowl suppers or other concerts. It was during his time that World War 2 broke out. He grafted a farewell service (for the only nurse who went from Lena) into the fowl supper concert.

He taught the young people's Bible class for a time and also came to our meetings.

A few years after he left the two United Churches in Killarney decided to go into one. As the former Methodist church was the larger building, they kept it and the Presbyterian manse, which was more convenient. The services at Lena were continued but those at Hullet (the school north of Killarney, formerly served by the Methodists) was not so fortunate.

Our next minister was an older man. He had married twice. The son, his second family, was still at home attending high school. This boy played the piano and wrote poetry. Some years later I met his mother in Winnipeg. She told me her son was going to Oxford on a scholarship in the coming year.

While they were in Killarney she gave a party for the members of the church board and their wives. As my Dad was then a widower I went with him. We played Chinese checkers which was then a new game (around our part of the country anyway.)

There were of course times between ministers. In one of these a retired minister came to fill in. He explained things most ministers did not bother with. He told us that it was possible to know the exact date of Easter. It had been traced back and was April 7. The reason for celebrating it by the moon was to have it the same time as the Passover.

He was there for a Sunday or two, and we still hadn't got another minister. They phoned my Dad (who was an elder) from Killarney to say that they would invite this man to stay on if Lena congregation was agreeable. The vote was in favor. When Dad phoned back he said,

"Tell him to stay. We all like him."

The last sentence was of course only intended for the one to whom it was addressed, but the total speech was evidently repeated to the minister. The following Sunday he came out beaming and after the service shook hands with everyone in the church, in fact, one lady said,

"He shook hands with me twice, when I was with my husband and once by myself."

Of course anyone is pleased to be liked but it is rather sad to think that a man toward the end of his life would have received so little praise that he could be affected so deeply by the appreciation of a small country congregation.

In 1944 my Dad sold his farm and we moved away. Another young minister had arrived a year or so before. At a joint meeting of Lena and Killarney his letter was read stating among other things that he shortly was to be married. Either one lady was not paying attention or was hard of hearing, she inquired,

"Is he married?"

The young man who was chairman of the meeting replied to everyone's amusement,

"Well, practically."

While my Dad was an elder he was a delegate to both the last Presbyterian Synod before union and the first general Council after. He spoke to a minister of one of the big city churches down east.

"I don't know you," the man answered.

"Do you remember Plum Hollow?" Dad asked.

"You take me a long way back," he exclaimed. "That was my first mission field."

After the hall burned, the church was used for more purposes. There was an outdoor entrance to the basement so it was not necessary to trail things through the sanctuary. Socials and concerts were held in the basement. There was a skipping contest, a bean-feed lunch, pork and beans, bread and butter. Once when we identified song names from pictures pinned to the posts. Mrs. Trevers held her concerts there, and for several years we held croquinole tournaments there. People came to them from surrounding districts. A garage man from Killarney came in his self-made snowmobile, a truck with a front sleigh bob replacing the two front wheels. The back axle adjusted to fit a sleigh trail. He was an

exceptionally good player and the man's prize went either to him or one of two brothers from the Rose Valley district.

As I travelled around from year to year, I had not transferred my church membership, so wished to have my marriage ceremony at Lena. We called on the minister, who had moved away, and invited him to perform the ceremony, as we had both known him before and I had scarcely met the then minister.

I had only been back to the church twice since I had gone away, once to a Christmas concert and to one of Mrs. Trevers' concerts.

I met one of the Lena ladies in town and arranged with her to ask the ladies to cater, and for her to mark the reserved pews. A few days beforehand they invited me out there on some pretext and gave me a shower. There were girls who had married into the district since I went away and women whose children I had gone to school with.

As the people who had the church built moved away or died, the congregation shrunk (though it kept its head above water financially). Some of those who had moved away wanted it closed. The battle went on for several meetings until they managed to have one when some of those trying to keep it open were away. Then the others achieved their end, with the support of presbytery.

The United Church had then joined the "Kill the country districts" campaign and were closing country churches right and left. I attended a presbytery meeting where I was living at the time. Some of the people from conference remarked on people going long distances for shopping, "So they could just as well do it for church." If you can't buy a winter coat in your village, you shouldn't be able to go to church there either, it seems.

Twice more I went to Lena church. Once to the funeral of a relative, the other to the closing service.

The church was not as full as at the opening. I was weeping my eyes out, so did a former neighbor who used to run down the road to get a ride to church with us during the depression when they weren't running their car. The three older Stewart boys were there. I thought of their mother who had played organ so long and got up the first choir.

Lunch was served afterwards in the basement. It had been fixed up. Dainty poles replaced the rough posts that were there when we had croquinole tournaments, socials and fowl suppers there.

The buildings was supposed to be torn down, but someone conveniently lost the deed and it was sold. It was divided into apartments.

Chapter 7
The Railway Families

The Giddings came from England. Mr. Giddings had worked for the railway there. They came to Canada about the time the C.N. was being extended from Neelin. Mrs. Giddings' sister was living in Neelin then and they stopped there for a time. An infant son, Hugh, was buried in Argyle cemetery.

There never was an agent in Lena, so as Mr. Giddings was the section foreman, they lived in the station house. As there was no telegraph operator, telegraph messages were sent over a private phone line which ran along the right-of-way. Mr. Giddings remained in that position in that location until he retired.

Mrs. Giddings was a jolly English woman who became the unofficial doctor of Lena. If anyone got hurt at school they were sent to her. A young man recently married got hurt at the elevator and startled his wife when he arrived with his head in a bandage.

The Giddings had three surviving children: Gladys, Frank and Viva.

Other men who worked on the track changed more often, though the second man remained long. The first of these was Sidney Carton. The Cartons lived in a two-storey house where Bates' house had formerly stood. Mr. Carton lit the school fire and they did the holiday cleaning of the school. When the church was built, he told those who were collecting that he could give no money but he and his wife would do the caretaking, which they did for a number of years.

Billy, their oldest son, took scarlet fever. Alex Baxter, who was a friend of the village children, determined to see the boy, and paying no heed to the quarantine, forced his way into the house. Although Mrs. Carton, who was a big woman, tried to hold the door, he may have been thinking of when the same disease deprived him of his hearing.

Mrs. Carton was a Baptist and often went to help Mrs. Rob Johnson who was also a Baptist. Mrs. Johnston had had seven operations for cancer. One day she said to Mrs. Carton,

"How can I ever repay you for your kindness?"

"If anything happens to me, you can take some of my children."

In the 1930's the government in its wisdom??????? decided to pull up some of its railways. As ours was a subbranch it was one of the first attacked. Hearings were held. The Pool members planned their defence, the man whom the government sent to interview them admitted that they put up the best argument they had received. It did, however, only delay the outcome.

The train had run out (from Winnipeg) Monday, Wednesday and Friday and back east the other three days. Now it was shortened to once a week (in spite of what we had put up with from it before), like a winter when two engines went off the track and were left until spring and Mr. Langenfeld did not get his Christmas trade goods until Easter, OR the night all the ladies were waiting for crates of raspberries while the train, hours late, came crawling in throwing off ties.

Freight was no longer carried between towns. This of course shut off the movement of cream to Belmont and bread from it. The mail came only once a week, instead of three. Just as it had before the railway, 40 years of progress???????

For weeks after they went on this schedule a freight went through on Sunday.

When Cartons' fourth child was quite young they decided to go farming. The Wheat Pool bought their house for their manager, Frank Early. He and his wife had been boarding at Shermans'.

Mrs. Carton died several years later. Mrs. Johnston wrote to Mr. Carton telling of her promise to his wife. He replied saying Charlie and Sidney would come after Christmas, but he wrote later saying he had decided to keep them.

Mrs. Early kept in touch with Dora, who wrote telling that they were having a hard time. Mrs. Early told the W.M.S. ladies and clothing for the children and a quilt was sent.

During the 30's the railway had a new use. Feed grain was shipped in. Farmers had to apply for it, giving an account of the land they had sown and how much it had yielded. They were allowed enough more to keep three cows plus one extra cow for each member of their household.

After the Cartons left Mr. Hardy came to be second man on track. They lived in the old railway car for a time, then rented Alex Baxter's house, he having built himself a smaller one. Later Hardys built a new house on the east side of the store hill, just west of what had been the garden of the old house on the corner. I do not know how many years they lived in Lena.

They were there the year that the store and blacksmith shop burned. Their youngest son Herb was born after they came to Lena. He was going to school and took the part of the smallest dwarf in a Christmas concert presentation of Snow White.

Frank Giddings, Hugh's surviving twin, also worked on the track. He married Vera Stone (the daughter of Mrs. Rob Johnston by her first marriage). They lived in the old railway car for a time, then bought the house that Bruce Bates had lived in when he was first married. They moved it to the corner where the Darrow house had formerly stood. Work on the track became scarcer and he got work on the railway in Winnipeg. On the way to work one day he dropped dead.

Chapter 8
Progressing Stages

A FOR SELLING GRAIN

Before the railway was built through Lena, grain for sale had to be hauled to Killarney or Holmfield. There were no elevators. If there were no boxcars available, some grain could be stored in warehouses, if there was still room in a bin for grain of that kind.

Grain was at that time caught, stored and transported in bags, until it was disposed of, for ease of handling and prevention of spoilage.

As farmers resented the amount of profit which grain companies were making (in proportion to their own) they formed the United Grain Growers company. Although that company never built in Lena, the shareholders sent delegates to annual meetings and got twine, etc., through the Killarney branch.

Two other farmers' organizations also at times had members at Lena, Manitoba Farmers Union and United Farmers of Manitoba. One of these had sufficient members to send two delegates to conventions. Through one of these, the farmers got a platform built at Lena. It was south of the track. The approach started just west of the road to the station from the store.

Box cars that a farmer ordered were spotted there. A temporary inner door of rough lumber was built half-way up. An open-topped shute was placed from the wagon to the car and the grain scooped in. That way grain could be hauled from the threshing machine (bags eliminated at last). The farmer was given a set time limit to fill the car, the section men (men who took care of the track) were obliged to supply more planks to build up the doorway.

In 1927 the Pool elevator was built. While this was progress the teacher took us over one day to see through it (a Social Studies trip before we ever heard of them). The end of the ramp leading up to the elevator began opposite and parallel to the end ramp of the loading platform.

B THE BEEF RING

Another Co-operative arrangement in the community was the Beef Ring. This was organized to run in the summer time, as before hydro there was no refrigeration. There were 20 shares in the ring. Families who required a lot of meat had a full share, others had half shares.

At a spring meeting it was decided when to start up for that year (depending of course on the weather). A specific weight of animal was decided upon and each share was responsible for providing a beast. The turns were changed each year so that those who supplied their animal early one year had a later turn the next year (and not to much stall feeding).

The first year or so the person who donated the beast got the hide. When the price of hides fell, some did not wish to be bother picking it up and sending it away. So it was decided that the butcher should keep the hides and if any money was made from them, it was his.

One man was hired to do the slaughtering and cutting. The beast was brought to a stall in the building a certain number of hours before it was to be killed. The meat was hung overnight and cut and bagged the next day. The bags were of strong cotton, each family supplying their own. They were hung in readiness, each share on its own nail. New unused grain bags, cut in two crossways, made two sturdy bags, but

were difficult to wash the stains out of. Some oilcloth was used. There were times when someone did not get their bag there on time and the meat was piled up with a note of ownership on top. If a neighbor had been asked to pick it up, she would have to use the bag she had brought for the next week and manage to get another there for herself by then.

This ring worked quite well for some years although it gave small families too much meat at once in hot weather.

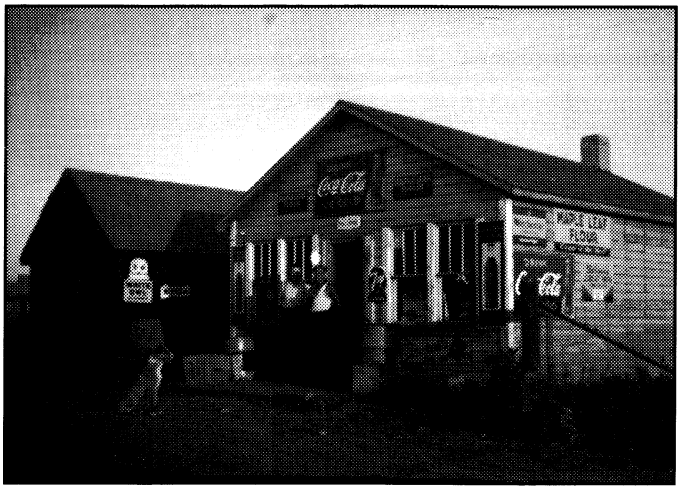
The roads were improving (there was a highway now all the way to Killarney), and butchers offered to kill a beast so that a farmer would get all his own meat, or he could take it all in roasts if he preferred, and as he wished to use it. New laws were also being passed concerning slaughter houses' construction, licensing of butchers, etc. With better vehicles too it was easier to make a trip to town. There were too few wanting to continue. So the beef ring was discontinued.

Chapter 9
Later Changes

The original school was torn down and replaced by a building with grey insulbrick siding. The pupils played Indian and built a torture fire in the barn. It was not put out properly and the barn burned down.

For several years there were sufficient pupils to hire a second teacher to teach high school. They held classes in the church. At first in the long room at the front of the church, later in the basement.

A married man was then running the Patterson elevator. His house was built a little further up the hill from the Hardy house.



After the blacksmith had built the new house, other families came to live in the old house on the corner.

Mrs. Sherman had died and Leslie joined up in World War 2. His father and sister moved away. A retired couple who had farmed southwest lived there for a time.

Trucks were doing more and more hauling so there was less and less work for the railway men. The Hardys sold their house to a cattle buyer and moved away.

A farmer built a small retirement house east of the Hardy house, on what had been the garden of the old house, where his daughter had come to live.

Mr. Trevers had some disagreement with the postal authorities and the post office was taken from him and given to Dave Piper, Dick Baxter's grandson He put up a new building for it on the northeast corner of the farm, next to the beef-ring building and, of course, added a store. This was the third store built in Lena.

Mrs. Trevers' sister came to Lena when she retired and had a house built near Trevers' store.

Fred Trevers, who had married during the War (Helen Miller, a granddaughter of the Jim Miller who had once run the Paterson elevator) came back to live in Lena for a time, when he came back from the navy. He worked as a customs officer at the port south of Lena, then was transferred to the port at the Peace Garden.

Another woman bought the senior Trevers' house. While she was in Killarney one day, the house burned down.